

January 30, 1973

Dr. Robert McC. Adams  
Assembly of Behavioral and Social Sciences  
National Research Council  
National Academy of Sciences  
2101 Constitution Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20418

Dear Dr. Adams,

Thank you for your letter of January 26, 1973. I am glad to note the progress that has been made towards the organization of the Assembly of Behavioral and Social Sciences. It is also obvious that my interests are quite convergent with the Assembly's. Except that I must put some reasonable limit on transcontinental travel and that the ration of residual possibility is still restricted, I would furthermore see no difficulty about accepting the responsibility of membership.

I do, however, have one serious and perhaps fatal reservation. If the total term of membership is indeed to be limited to a five year term and one renewal, my own projections about the probable range and scope of my own activities, and some rough actuarial calculation, suggest that I should postpone membership in the Assembly for another six or seven years as a way to maximize my eventual contribution and retrospective satisfaction. Taking further account of a small discount rate I would be moved to accept your invitation but to set an effective date of January 1, 1978.

I realize that you may have to interpret this as a declination, a position which I would have to accept although with regret. I did express my concern about this structural problem of the Assembly's charter at some time earlier; obviously there are other considerations that attach some wisdom to the policy of limited tenure of Assembly membership.

Since my membership in the Academy is not restricted in this way, I assume that there will continue to be a channel by which you and your colleagues may be aware of my possible availability for indispensable tasks. Indeed, I might at some time suggest an appropriate amendment to the charter of the Assembly to the effect that Academy members may be self-designated as "associate members" of the Assembly without limit of time, a situation that probably will reflect the realities of their participation regardless of their formal designation.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics

cc: Dr. Philip Handler